

Pam.
Biog.
E

Furber, Daniel L.

Missionary Labors of
the Apostle Eliot

Pam
Biog.
E.

MISSIONARY LABORS OF THE APOSTLE ELIOT.

A Discourse

DELIVERED OCTOBER 25, 1896, TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS
FROM THE TIME THOSE LABORS WERE BEGUN.

By REV. DANIEL L. FURBER, D.D.

Pastor Emeritus of the First Church in Newton, Mass.,
at Newton Centre.

BOSTON
The Pilgrim Press
CHICAGO



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2018 with funding from
Columbia University Libraries

<https://archive.org/details/missionarylabors00furb>

THE APOSTLE ELIOT.

Ephesians 4:11. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."

EVERY one of these titles may be applied to the man of whom I am to speak. He was called the "apostle" Eliot; he was a prophet because he spoke the words of God; he was an evangelist in the sense of being a traveling missionary; and he was pastor and teacher to the church in Roxbury. A custom existed among the Indians of never passing by the grave of one of their chief men without leaving upon it some token of their regard. They believed that if they failed to do this they should never prosper again. If the region around Boston were now inhabited by their descendants, how thickly would John Eliot's grave in Roxbury be bestrown with pledges of the undying affection which they felt for him! This tribute of their gratitude they cannot now pay to him, but we who live amid the scenes of his first missionary labors may do what is equivalent to it by rehearsing his deeds. There is an especial reason why this church should do it, for he was here at its formation in 1664, and assisted in the ordination of his son as its first minister.

Having graduated from Cambridge University, where most of the Puritan ministers were educated, Mr. Eliot became an usher in a school kept by Thomas Hooker, not far from London. Mr. Hooker, having been silenced for nonconformity, and being no longer permitted to enter a pulpit, betook himself to teaching. His influence upon Eliot led to the conversion of the latter, and to his devoting himself to the Christian ministry, but as he was a Nonconformist he could not preach in England, and therefore came to America. On his arrival here in 1631, Mr. Wilson, the first minister of Boston, was absent on a visit to England, and Mr. Eliot was engaged by his church to preach for them until their pastor returned. He was so much liked, that he was urged to remain with them as an assistant to Mr. Wilson. Governor Winthrop, who was the leading man in the church, says, "We labored all we could to keep him with us." But he had promised some friends in England that if they would follow him to the new country he would be their minister. They came the next year and made their home in Roxbury, where he served them about fifty-eight years.

When he had been in Roxbury about fourteen years he began his work for the native Indian tribes. He said that his object was threefold: first, the glory of God's grace in the salvation of

some of them ; secondly, his own love and compassion for their poor desolate souls ; and thirdly, the fulfilling of a tacit engagement in the charter by which the colony was established.

In looking around upon these tribes he beheld, first, the Massachusetts Indians, not headed by any great sachem or king, but scattered in small companies through a district extending from the coast westward as far as to the sources of the Blackstone River, and southward to the river Neponset. Their chief localities are embraced within the present towns of Dorchester, Newton, Concord, and Grafton. Then there were the Pawtucket Indians living along the Merrimac River at Pawtucket Falls, the site of the present city of Lowell. Westward were the Nipmucks, occupying a large part of what is now Worcester County. Southward were the Wampanoags under the powerful Massasoit, all along the bay, at Cape Cod, and on the islands.

With all these tribes Eliot came more or less in contact. He had most to do with those who lived westerly and northerly from Boston and Roxbury ; Massasoit and his tribe at the south being provided for by the Mayhews on Martha's Vineyard, and the neighboring islands by Mr. Cotton of Plymouth, and by Roger Williams of Rhode Island.

On the twenty-eighth of October, 1646, Mr.

Eliot, in company with three other persons, who probably were Thomas Shepard and Daniel Gookin, of Cambridge, and Mr. Wilson, of Boston, made his first visit to Nonantum. Edward Jackson, of Newton, was constantly present at the meetings, taking notes of what was said and done. He was the man in whose house meetings were held by the people of this place, before a meeting-house was built or a church formed. His house stood near the line between Newton and Brighton. Mr. Eliot had previously told the Indians that the superiority of the English over them was owing to their knowledge of the true God and of the arts, and to their industry and regular habits. This led the Indians greatly to desire instruction, and when he told them he would come and teach them they were in great joy. On the appointed day they watched eagerly for his approach, and when he came in sight hastened to meet and welcome him. They assembled in the wigwam of Waban, their chief man, and listened an hour and a quarter to a sermon from the text, "Prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live" (Ezek. 37 : 9). The preacher explained the commandments, showed the "curse and dreadful wrath of God" against those who break them, and then preached Jesus Christ as "the only

means of recovery from sin and wrath and eternal death." It so happened that the Indian word for wind was Waban, and the men understood the text to mean, Prophecy and say to Waban.

When the discourse was ended they were asked whether they understood what they had heard. Many voices answered, Yes. They were then allowed to ask questions, and the first question they asked was, "How may we come to know Jesus Christ?" The preacher then said to them, "You must think of what we have told you. You must think much and often upon it, both when you lie down on your mats in your wigwams, and when you rise up and walk alone in the fields and woods; and you must pray to God to reveal to you Jesus Christ, and though you cannot make long prayers as the English do, yet if you do but sigh and groan, and say, 'Lord, make me to know Jesus Christ, for I know him not'; and if you do say so again and again in your hearts, He is such a God as will be found of them that seek him with all their hearts; and you must confess your sins, and mourn for them, and acknowledge how just it would be for God to deny you the knowledge of Jesus Christ or anything else, because of your sins."

The next question was whether God could understand prayers in the Indian language. The preacher told them that the same God who made

the English made the Indians also, and therefore he must know the minds and the speech of both. "For," said he, "there is a basket. It is made of white straws and black straws and many other things which I do not know; but the man that made it knows; he knows all that is in it."¹

The preacher greatly interested the men by his gift of illustration. In speaking of the existence of God he said: "If you see a great wigwam or a great house, would you say it made itself? Would you say the foxes or the raccoons had built it? You never saw the builder of it, but would you doubt that it was made by a wise workman? So when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, and the world and all that is in it, you should say there must be a God who made all these things."

In explaining how God could be in many places at the same time the preacher pointed to the sun. "The sun," said he, "is only one of the creatures which God has made, but the light of it is in this wigwam and the next, in Nonantum and in Boston, in Massachusetts and in Old England, all at

¹ Dr. A. C. Thompson quotes from "Westerly and its Witnesses" the story of an Indian woman in Rhode Island who became deeply interested for her salvation. Her Christian friends exhorted her to pray. She supposed she must pray in English and she knew but one English word—the word "broom." Her anxiety became intense, and at last throwing herself into the attitude of a suppliant she cried out, "Broom! broom! broom!" God answered her heart instead of her lips and filled her with light and love and joy.

the same time. In the same way God can be in all places at the same time."

In showing the difference between outward acts of worship and a right heart he said, "Outward acts are the shell, and a right heart is the kernel. The shell is important, but the kernel is much more important."

Other questions asked by the Indians were, "Why did not God give all men good hearts that they might be good?" "Why did not God kill the devil that made all men so bad?" "If a man should be enclosed in iron a foot thick and be cast into the fire, what would become of his soul? Could the soul come forth thence or not?" "If a man talk of another's faults and tell others of them when he is not present to answer, is not that a sin?" "Do not Englishmen spoil their souls when they say that a thing cost them more than it did cost; and is not that all one as to steal?" A drunken Indian asked, "Who made sack?" But the other Indians silenced him and told him that was a papoose question.

Two weeks later another meeting was held at which Mr. Eliot asked the men whether something did not trouble them after the commission of sin, such as murder, adultery, theft, and lying; and what they thought would comfort them against this trouble when they should die and appear before God. They answered that they

were troubled, and that they could not tell what would comfort them. The preacher then told them that God had sent Jesus Christ to die for their sins, and to satisfy the justice of God by his sufferings in their stead and room, if they did repent and believe the gospel, and that he would love the poor miserable Indians if now they sought God and believed in Jesus Christ.

An aged Indian asked if it was not too late for such an old man as he to repent and seek after God. Two or three others were so much affected by what had been said to them that they could not conceal their weeping, though they tried much to do it. "We observed," says Eliot, "that one of them, having his eyes red with weeping, turned his face to a corner of the wigwam to avoid being seen; at which we went to him and spoke encouraging words. But hearing these he fell to weeping more and more, which forced us also to weep with him." This meeting lasted the whole afternoon, and such was the effect of the truth that Waban and his men could not sleep. He prayed with them and instructed them at intervals through the night.

The attention of the missionary was next turned to the Pawtucket Indians on the Merrimac River, and then to tribes westward from Boston. Four times in the summer of 1648 he made journeys to the vicinity of what is now the town of

Lancaster, forty miles from Roxbury, where he found men eager for the gospel. From this point he went still farther west, as far as to the present town of Brookfield. The distance was sixty miles. There were no roads, no bridges, and no comfortable houses for lodging and refreshment. Swollen rivers must be forded, and drenching rains endured, which made the ground soft and oozy, and the progress of the journey tediously slow. There were also hostilities among the Indian tribes, which made traveling dangerous. But Shawanon, the sachem of the Nashaways, accompanied Eliot with a guard of twenty men, by whose help he accomplished his journey at the cost of incredible hardship. "It pleased God," says he, "to exercise us with such tedious raine and bad weather, that we were extreme wet, insomuch that I was not dry, night nor day, from the third day of the week unto the sixth ; but so traveled, and at night pull off my boots, wring my stockins, and on with them again, and so continued ; the rivers also were raised so that we were wet in riding through ; but that which added to my affliction was my horse tyred, so that I was forced to let my horse go empty, and ride on one of the men's horses. I considered that word of God, 'Endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ.' "

Once a year this indefatigable man went to the region of the present town of Chelmsford "to

spread the gospel net," as he said, for the Pennacooks, who every spring came down the river as far as that to fish. He made long tours through the Nipmuck country, where were established seven praying towns.

As a result of all these labors the Indians were induced to change their habits and live more as the English did. They pledged themselves to decency, cleanliness, good order, and industry. They renounced polygamy, ceased their howlings, left off greasing their bodies and decorating their hair, wore suitable clothes, and knocked at the door before entering a neighbor's house. Previously the Indian had looked upon labor as degrading, and he put that drudgery upon his wife, while he went hunting and fishing. Now he was willing to work, and his wife turned her attention to housekeeping. He learned the law of kindness to his wife, and when any violation of that law occurred it was reported at the lecture which was given once in two weeks, and the offender was rebuked. At one of the lectures an Indian by the name of Wampas was accused of beating his wife in a fit of passion. He immediately arose, before a large meeting, which was attended by the governor and others of the English, and humbly confessed his fault, taking the blame wholly to himself. Being reminded of the heinous nature of his sin, he turned his face to the wall and wept. Many of

the Indians gave evidence of a radical change in them by their prayerful lives, their attention to all religious duties, their honesty and truthfulness, their kindness to one another, their tenderness of conscience, and the meekness with which they suffered injuries or received admonition for their faults. They prayed morning and evening in their families, and before and after meat, kept the Sabbath, and held religious meetings among themselves. Wannalancet, sachem of the Pennacooks, said, "I have been used all my life to pass up and down in an old canoe, but now I give up myself to your advice, enter into a new canoe, and do engage to pray to God hereafter."

In 1651 the Nonantum Indians were removed to South Natick. One reason for the removal was that many of the English disliked them and wanted them to be farther away. Mr. Eliot did not object to establishing a settlement for them at South Natick, for he thought it might correct their roving habits. Some of the Concord Indians joined them there.

The settlement was on both sides of the river, across which a footbridge was built eighty feet long. They built a meeting-house fifty feet long, twenty-five wide, and twelve feet high, with a room overhead in which was a prophet's chamber, with a bed in it for Mr. Eliot to sleep in when he passed a night there. The building was also used as a schoolhouse.

When they were fairly established at Natick, their good friend and teacher desired to form the praying Indians into a church, and for this purpose he called the neighboring ministers together to listen to their narratives of religious experience. The ministers who came were Mr. Wilson, of Boston; Mr. Shepard, of Cambridge; Mr. Allen, of Dedham; and Mr. Dunster, first president of Harvard College.

These men were satisfied with the evidences of Christian character which were presented to them, and were in favor of admitting the converts to the privilege of a public covenant with God and of baptism and the Lord's Supper. But so strong was the prejudice of the English against the Indians, and so full were they of suspicions of them, that it was thought best to wait until a better feeling should prevail; and the result was that a church was not formed until 1660, a church of between forty and fifty members; and this was nine years after evidence of fitness for church membership had been given that was satisfactory to some of the best ministers in the colony. The narratives of religious experience were written down and preserved, and can be seen and read by any who desire to read them.

Mr. Eliot trained the most gifted Indians to conduct religious meetings in which they explained the Scriptures and gave exhortations to their

brethren. At one such meeting Governor Endicott and Mr. Wilson were present, and about twenty other English persons. An Indian prayed about a quarter of an hour, and then explained the parables of the treasure hid in the field and the merchantman seeking goodly pearls. He said the hidden treasure was the knowledge of Jesus Christ, including repentance, pardon, and the means of grace. The things to be parted with in order to gain it were their old customs and vices. The merchantman seeking goodly pearls was the poor, praying Indian seeking after God and truth. The pearl of great price was faith in the Saviour. In order to buy it our sins must be cast away. We exchange our sins for the pearl. On these points he dilated with fervor, and applied them with hearty feeling to the condition of his Indian brethren. After this a hymn was sung by the men and the women to an English tune. The governor and Mr. Wilson listened to the exercise with great delight. The governor said he could scarcely refrain from tears of joy.

An address was made on a Fast Day in a time of prevailing sickness by Wauban. His text was, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." He said: "I am a poor, weak man, and know but little, and therefore I shall say but little. These words are a similitude, that as some be sick and some well, and we see in

experience that when we be sick we need a physician and go to him, and make use of his physic, but they that be well do not so, they need it not and care not for it, so it is with soul sickness. And we are all sick of that sickness in our souls, but we know it not. We have many at this time sick in body, for which cause we do fast and pray this day and cry to God ; but more are sick in their souls. We have a great many diseases and sicknesses in our souls, as idleness, passion, neglect of the Sabbath, and so forth ; therefore what should we do this day but go to Christ, for Christ is the Physician of souls ? He healed men's bodies, but he can heal souls also. He is a great Physician, therefore let all sinners go to him."

Mr. Eliot gives an account of the death of Wampas, who on his dying bed said, "God giveth us three things in this world : first, health and strength ; secondly, food and clothes ; and thirdly, sickness and death." His last words were, "O Lord, give me Jesus Christ !" And he continued holding up his hands in silent prayer as long as he had strength. The Indians had been in the habit of flying in terror from dying persons and leaving them to die alone, but they gathered around Wampas, weeping and listening to his gracious words. "Nor am I able," says Mr. Eliot, "to write his story without weeping." This is the Indian who confessed with tears to having beaten his wife.

The missionary work of Mr. Eliot reached its highest degree of prosperity in 1674, at which time the whole number of praying Indians under his care was 1,100, with twenty-four native preachers. Dr. A. C. Thompson doubts whether there are twenty-four Indian preachers now in the whole country.

I will speak next of some of the forms of opposition which were encountered.

The first was from the Indian priests or powaws, whose supposed connection with the invisible world gave them great influence. The Indians had great fear of the evil spirit or Chepian, as they called him, and the main object of their religious rites was to avert his wrath. The powaws were the accredited agents for doing this, and death and life were supposed to be in their power. If any one was ill, the powaw must come and appease Chepian before health could return. He came as priest, physician, and juggler all in one. His howlings and dances and bodily contortions, his charms and incantations, were as important as his roots and herbs; and with these frantic performances he kept his victims in terror. Even the praying Indians stood in awe of him, and Mr. Eliot said he could observe a striking difference in their countenances when a powaw was present at any of their meetings.

Another form of opposition was from the sa-

chems, who feared a loss of power. Sachem Cutshamakin, of Neponset, went to Natick and demanded in great wrath that Mr. Eliot should desist from building a town there. The Indians were frightened and ran away, leaving Mr. Eliot alone with the sachem. Setting his eyes upon the savage he said, "I am about the work of the great God, and my God is with me, so that I neither fear you nor all the sachems in the country. I shall go on with my work, and do you touch me if you dare." The spirit of the great chief shrunk and fell, and the Indians showed their pleasure by smiles which they were careful to conceal from the sachem.

But the greatest calamity that ever befell the missionary work for the Indians was the desolating war of King Philip in 1675-1676. This was also a severe trial to Mr. Eliot, for it brought every red man under the suspicion of siding with Philip. Eliot had confidence in them, and so had Mr. Gookin, of Cambridge, and the few who had intimate knowledge of them; but the efforts of these men to defend the Christian Indians from suspicion only resulted in drawing hostile feeling upon themselves. Mr. Gookin sometimes feared to walk the streets. The terror of that war in which six hundred of the flower of New England were slain, in which six hundred houses were burnt, and twelve towns utterly destroyed, had

created such a panic through the land that every man with a copper-colored face was looked upon as a faithless and bloody savage. Such a torrent of unreasonable antipathy Eliot, with all his influence, could not understand. With an affecting tenderness he told his beloved church at Natick that their settlement must be broken up, for the court had decided that they must all, about two hundred in number, be removed to Deer Island. "And now," said he, "you will learn that through much tribulation you are to enter into the kingdom of heaven." They listened sadly, but submissively, to the decree of the court. Quietly, but in the silence of a heavy heart, they took with them their scanty stock of food and clothing, and bade farewell to a place which had been their home for twenty-five years. Boats were made ready for them on the river two miles above Cambridge. At the appointed time Mr. Eliot met them there to console them and to assure them of his unwavering confidence. "All who were present," said he, "were deeply moved to see the quiet resignation of the poor souls, exhorting one another and encouraging one another with prayers and tears."

The Stoughton Indians were also removed to Deer Island, and the whole number collected there was five hundred. Mr. Eliot went to the island to visit them as often as he could. He found

them patient and uncomplaining. So excellent was the temper which they showed that they soon began to regain their place in the public confidence; and then it was thought what an efficient ally they might be in the war against Philip. The subject was opened to them and they expressed themselves ready and willing to fight for the English against Philip, and be faithful to them as they said they always had been. The court then recalled from the island all who could be serviceable in the war, and their assistance, as a military force, well acquainted with the skulking methods of savage warfare, was invaluable. In the summer of 1676 they took and killed four hundred of the enemy.

On the twelfth of August in that year, the death of Philip by a musket ball put an end to the war, and with it to the unreasonable feeling which had existed toward the Christian Indians. Soon after, the whole company, which had been banished to Deer Island, were allowed to return. Some came to Nonantum, and passed the winter on the same spot where thirty years before their apostolic friend had first met them with the gospel. He, then seventy-two years old, reëstablished his Nonantum lecture and preached to them once a fortnight all that winter.

When we think of the sad fate of these native tribes, of the heavy burden of injuries under

which they groaned, and of the cruel suspicions which pierced their hearts, it is a comfort to remember that there was one champion of their rights who never forsook them; one steadfast and unfailing friend who loved them and trusted them.

And when our hearts are pained by the long recital of grievances which have been suffered by other tribes in our country at the hands of a faithless government, grievances which it is now too late to redress, it is a relief to remember the time when words of kindness and of compassion were spoken to the savage, and the hand of affectionate confidence was extended to him, and to know that the original possessor of these hills and valleys, these plains and forests, these lakelets and streams, was not allowed to pass away with only the bitter and unrelieved remembrance of suspicions and defeats and wrongs.

I have not told the whole story of the missionary labors of this apostolic man until I have spoken of the almost incredible achievement of the translation by him of the entire Bible into the Indian tongue. Edward Everett, in one of his orations, says, "The Christian Church does not contain an example of resolute, untiring, successful labor superior to that of translating the entire Scriptures into the language of the native tribes of Massachusetts; a dialect as imperfect,

as unformed, as unmanageable, as any spoken on earth."

The instances in which the whole Bible has been translated into a heathen tongue by the single-handed labors of one man are very few. There is Carey's Bible in Bengalee; Judson's in Burmese; that of Hiram Bingham, Jr., in the language of the Gilbert Islanders, and I know not whether there are any others. But Eliot's work was done long before theirs, and he is the pioneer translator, from whose patient and unwearied labors have grown all the Bible societies in the world, and editions of the sacred Book in almost every language under heaven. Let it be considered also that the language of these Indian tribes was never before reduced to writing. It had no literature, no grammar, no lexicon.

When the translation was completed, the good author said, "Prayer and pains, through faith in Jesus Christ, will do anything."

The first edition, consisting of fifteen hundred copies, was issued at Cambridge in 1663, was dedicated to King Charles II, and was the first Bible ever printed in America. It was printed at the expense of the English Society for Propagating the Gospel, at the cost of nine hundred pounds. It supplied the demand for twenty years, after which there was an urgent call for another edition. The unwearied translator, at the age of seventy-

nine, entered upon the preparation of it, greatly assisted by Rev. John Cotton, of Plymouth. He lived to superintend its publication in 1685, an edition of two thousand copies. It was doubtless one of the sweetest comforts of his old age to think that the book, on which he had bestowed so much pains, would continue to be read by successive generations of the race for whom it was prepared, and that it would be cherished as a priceless treasure by their posterity, perhaps for hundreds of years. But alas! the call for another edition was never made. It is probable that the very language in which this Bible was written has ceased to be spoken. The tribes who once read it have perished; the last of the Mohegans have passed away, and it has often been said that probably there is not an Indian in all America who can read Eliot's Bible. But Bishop Whipple has recently stated that there are five hundred Ojibways in Minnesota who can read it. Even if this were not so, the Bible has value, for with the Indian grammar which Eliot prepared, it is an important contribution to the science of comparative philology, and as such it is the object of the attention of scholars in our own time.

Mr. Eliot was the author of a number of books in the Indian language, among which were a Catechism, a Primer, and a Psalter; and he translated into that language Bayley's "Practice of

Piety," Baxter's "Call to the Unconverted," and Shepard's "Sincere Convert" and "Sound Believer."

Of the first edition of the Bible there are said to be twenty-three copies in America and ten in Europe. A copy of it, bound with a metrical version of the Psalms, has been sold for twelve hundred and fifty dollars. Of the second edition there are fifty or sixty copies in this country. A copy of the Bay Psalm Book has sold for twelve hundred dollars. Eliot was one of the editors of it.

Cotton Mather says of Mr. Eliot's preaching, "He could have said with Paul, 'I determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ,'" and that he mentioned that blessed name in his discourses with a frequency like that with which Paul mentions it in his epistles. He says also that he was like Moses, because his face was continually shining as a result of his communion with God. In one of his sermons Mr. Eliot says, "We pray in our meetings, we pray morning and evening in our families, we pray in our closets three times in a day if we are like David and Daniel, and we have through the day many scores of ejaculations." When he was in a company of ministers he would say, "Come, let us not separate without a prayer. God looks upon his ministers." The name "praying Indian" originated with the Indians them-

selves. By a praying Indian they meant a Christian Indian, and it is quite possible that their teacher's instructions to them on the subject of prayer, and his own example as a praying man, may have led them to speak in that way.

Mr. Eliot loved children. He said that the care of the lambs was one third of Christ's charge to Peter. Whenever he went to Nonantum he filled his capacious pockets with apples and cakes and goodies for the papooses. He urged the establishment of schools, and through his influence the children in Roxbury were better educated, so Richard Mather said, than in any other town. He gave seventy-five acres of land for a school at Jamaica Plain, and provided that Indian and negro children should be admitted to it. He tells a remarkable story of what he said was a manifestation of faith in an Indian child who died at the age of three years. The child had some toys with which he was much pleased when in health, but when they were brought to him in his sickness, to divert him from his pains, he pushed them aside, saying, "I will leave my basket behind me, for I am going to God; I will leave my spoon and my tray behind me, for I am going to God."

So full was the heart of this good man of benevolence that there was no room in it for the love of money. It is said that out of his small income he gave hundreds of pounds to the poor. The parish

treasurer at one time in paying him his salary, knowing his habit of giving his money away, tied it up in a handkerchief with as many hard knots as he could make, to prevent him from giving it away before he reached home. On his way home he called at a house where there were poverty and sickness, and told the woman of the house that he had brought her some relief. He then tried to untie the knots, and after working at them a long time without being able to loosen them, he gave the woman the handkerchief and all that was in it, saying, "Here, my dear, take it; I believe the Lord designs it all for you." Sometimes, no doubt, he gave away more money than he could afford to give, and kept too little for himself and his family. In doing this you will say he was indiscreet. But is it not evident that Paul was very much pleased with the Macedonian Christians when they gave more than they could afford to; and when he saw that the depth of their poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality, was he not very proud of them? Such giving shows true greatness of soul.

In his old age this saintly man said rather playfully that he feared his friends, Mr. Cotton, of Boston, and Mr. Mather, of Dorchester, who had then been in heaven a long time, would suspect that he had gone the wrong way because he stayed so long behind them. And then he said, "I

wonder for what the Lord Jesus Christ lets me live; he knows that now I can do nothing for him." Then it occurred to him that he might teach the negroes who were at service in families. He sent for them and they came to his house once a week for religious instruction. He greatly blamed the English families for neglecting to teach them. There was also a blind boy whom he sent for that he might teach him.

How much of the spirit of his Master do we see in this godly man! How closely did he walk in the steps of him who went about doing good! Care for the poor, care for the Indian, care for the negro, care for the blind, care for everybody that needed help. Well might Shepard of Cambridge say, "I think we can never love nor honor this man of God enough;" and well might Baxter on his dying bed say, "There was no man on earth whom I honored above him."

Is not this Christian hero well worthy of the name of an apostle? He was so humble that he did not like to be called an *evangelist*, and he asked people not to bestow that honor upon him. But he is the *apostle* Eliot; he has been called that for nearly two hundred and forty years, and we never shall call him anything else.

Having enjoyed in the mother country, at one of her ancient universities, every facility for

mental enlargement and liberal culture, here in a desolate wilderness he enters smoky wigwams that could not keep out the wind and rain, and opens the mysteries of the gospel to men whom he described as "the dregs of mankind, the saddest spectacles of misery upon earth." To carry the message of salvation to such persons in their miserable hovels, he said was "like opening an alabaster box of precious odors in the dark and gloomy habitations of the unclean." "He had popular talents which gave him distinction among the first divines of Massachusetts, at a time when the clergy were held in peculiar honor ;" and yet, such was the love and compassion which he felt for these "poor desolate souls," as he called them, that the fame of his labors in their behalf is his chief distinction, and he is more known to the world as the apostle to the Indians than as the Roxbury minister. Richard Baxter said to him in a letter, "There is no man on earth whose work I think more honorable than yours. The industry of the Jesuits and friars, and their successes in Congo, Japan, and China, shame us all save you."

And yet how evident it is that Eliot did not have the sympathy and help in his work that he ought to have had ! The great body of the English people felt little or no interest in it. They disliked the Indians and wanted to have as little to do with them as possible. Hence the removal

of them to South Natick, and the long delay to form them into a church. Hence also the base and cruel suspicion of them in the time of King Philip's war, the breaking up of their homes in Natick, and their banishment to Deer Island. But we hear no word of complaint of all this from the man whose work was hindered by it. Did it not seem strange to him that those who gave him no help could not at least refrain from putting obstacles in his way? But he speaks not a word of censure. Patiently, meekly, gently, he accepts the inevitable, works as long as he can, and then waits for an opportunity to do more.

If he had known that the Indians were a short-lived race, soon to vanish away, would he have had the courage to toil seventeen years in translating the Bible for them? He thought they might be descendants of the lost ten tribes of Israel to whom precious promises had been made, and though they were living in such deep debasement, they were no more beyond hope than was the valley full of dry bones which Ezekiel saw, and he believed that the breath of the Lord could blow upon them and make them live. This was what he had in mind at the very first meeting he had with them in Waban's wigwam. Hence the text that he preached from, "Prophesy unto the wind, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and

breathe upon these slain, that they may live." The breath of the Lord did breathe upon them and they lived. Almighty power did come to them and lifted them out of the horrible pit and the miry clay. The dayspring from on high did visit them as they sat in darkness and the shadow of death, and gave them the light of life. And though as a race they have perished from the earth, the names of the praying Indians are not blotted out from the Book of Life. The work which their beloved friend and teacher did for them was wrought upon the imperishable tablets of hearts that will forever respond to his teaching, and they are even now his joy and crown of rejoicing in the presence of his Lord and theirs.

In bringing good tidings to these children of the forest the preacher showed them very plainly the dreadful consequences of rejecting his message and of dying in their sins. Carne, in his life of Eliot, in which are many inaccuracies, says that the missionary painted the ineffable love of Christ, and the blessed state of those who believe in him, and then asks, "Of what avail would it have been to set before his audience the terrors of the Almighty and the doom of the guilty?" But this is just what the preacher did. In the original account of the first meeting that was held we read that he spoke "about the joys of heaven and the terrors and horrors of wicked men in hell." Carne

adds that Eliot was a "wise man, and that he knew that the heart loves better to be persuaded than terrified, to be melted than alarmed." But Eliot was no wiser than the Holy Scriptures are, which address the fears of men in the most terrific manner. If he had spoken only of the ineffable love of Christ and never mentioned the wrath of God and of the Lamb, he would have misrepresented the character of God, would have delivered only a part of the message which he was sent to deliver, and would have shown himself unfit to be a messenger at all, except to those who say, "Speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits." We are contemplating the career of a successful missionary, and it is important to know the course he pursued. We find that like his Master he went to the people with a heart full of love to them, and like his Master he spoke the whole truth without concealment and without evasion. In the same way may any missionary or minister hope for success in his work.

We see in the results of these missionary labors what class of persons it is that is most influenced by the gospel; namely, the poor, the weak, the neglected. Our Lord said, "To the poor the gospel is preached." Why did not Massasoit, the great sagamore of the Wampanoags, receive the gospel when it was offered to him? Why did not his son, King Philip, the terror of all New Eng-

land, receive it? Because he was strong, and had that pride of power and sense of self-sufficiency which so often lead to the rejection of the gospel. But the Massachusetts Indians were weak. They were only broken and scattered fragments of a tribe that had almost been swept out of existence by a wasting sickness. They looked up to the English as a superior race, and were willing to be instructed by them. King Philip looked down even upon a Massachusetts governor because he was a subject. "I will treat," said he, "only with my brother, King Charles of England." So haughty a spirit as this could not easily submit to the humbling terms of the gospel, and he rejected them with scorn. He was not the kind of man to say, "I am a sinner, and feel the need of a Saviour." Taking hold of a button on Mr. Eliot's coat, he said, "I care no more for your gospel than I do for that button." But the Massachusetts Indians were of a lowly mind, and to them the news of pity and help from an almighty Saviour was welcome. It was good news. Oh, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!

The name of Eliot has exerted a stimulating influence upon the cause of foreign missions. He has been called the morning star of modern missionary enterprise. When the Pilgrims and the Puritans came to these shores their object was to bring the

gospel to the aborigines of this continent. We commonly say and sing that they came for freedom to worship God, and so they did, but that was not all they came for, nor was it the principal thing. The charter of the colony of Massachusetts Bay states that the principal end of the plantation was to win the natives to the Christian faith. Governor Bradford speaks in a similar way of the object of the Plymouth Colony. Eliot carried out the purpose of the plantation, but he did more than that. He struck a note that has been vibrating ever since. It was heard across the sea in Old England, and soon societies for the propagation of the gospel in foreign parts began to be formed both in England and Scotland under the stimulus, no doubt, of the good news from America. Eliot was in constant correspondence with Hon. Robert Boyle, from whom the money came for the prosecution of his work, and whom he addressed as the "Nursing Father" of it. The mother of Samuel J. Mills in Torrington, Conn., used to talk to her boy from early childhood about John Eliot and David Brainerd, that she might interest him in the missionary work to which she had consecrated him. We now speak of Mills as the father of the foreign missionary work in America. He it was who said, "We can send the gospel to India if we will." When five young men were ordained as the first

missionaries to India in the old Tabernacle Church in Salem in 1812, Dr. Spring, of Newburyport, said to them in his charge, "Go, and lay your bodies by the side of Ziegenbalg and Schwartz, that you may meet them with Eliot and Brainerd, and all other faithful missionaries in the realms of light."

Though it be true that the men for whom Eliot toiled and prayed have now no representatives on the earth to rehearse his deeds, there is a sense in which it may be said that all the missionary movements of our time are indebted to him. Think how much has been done for mankind in two hundred and fifty years by missionary societies in England and Scotland and other parts of the Protestant world, not one of which was in existence when Eliot began. Think how much has been done by our own American Board in its eighty-six years of seed-sowing among the nations, and of what his example did for that. And then think how many stirring appeals on the platforms of missionary gatherings have been made eloquent by the use of his name, and how many mountains of difficulty have been removed out of the way by the thought of what he accomplished.

The longest life on earth is short, but it is long enough to exhibit to the world a great example, and that is something which will never die. Longfellow in referring to the well-known fact that if a star in the remotest depths of space were blotted

out of existence, we should not know it, for the light which has been for ages on its way to us would still continue to shine, beautifully adds : —

“ So when a great man dies,
For years beyond our ken,
The light he leaves behind him lies
Upon the paths of men.”

The man who lives a grandly beneficent life blesses the world, not merely by what he does, but by showing what can be done. He blesses it by his deeds, and he blesses it by the inspiring power of an example which sends into thousands of ingenuous hearts the impulse of a desire to be like him. Oh, that this might be the effect upon each one of us, of our meditation upon this great life, and as we think of him in the shining cloud of witnesses who look down upon us, may our selfishness and slothfulness be rebuked, our hearts be filled with love, our hands with diligence, and our lives with self-sacrifice; and may the spirit of Him who came to this world not to be ministered unto but to minister be upon us !

DATE DUE

JAN 10 '72

USE FOR ONE MONTH

GAYLORD

PRINTED IN U.S. A.

